

## Thunderstorm Safety

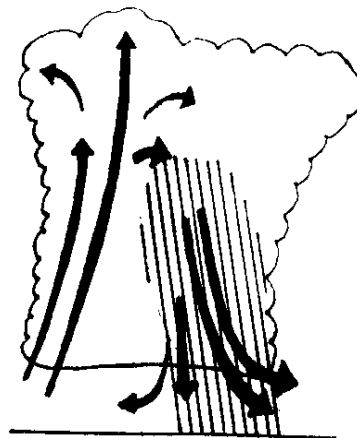
**Lightning**, one of nature's most spectacular wonders, is also one of its most **deadly** events. It is estimated that lightning strikes the earth 100 times each second! Deaths and injuries from lightning can be avoided if people take the proper precautions. One important thing to remember; **all** thunderstorms produce lightning.

**If lightning threatens**, move indoors. Once inside, avoid doors, windows, and metal objects. Avoid using electrical appliances. Use the telephone only in an emergency.

**If driving**, stay in your automobile. An enclosed automobile offers reasonably good protection from lightning.

**Outdoors**, stay away from isolated trees. If your hair stands on end or your skin tingles, lightning may be about to strike. Crouch down quickly and make a low target.

Thunderstorms also can produce strong wind gusts. These straight-line winds have been known to reach 100 miles an hour. For this reason, you should treat severe thunderstorms just as you would tornadoes. Move to appropriate shelter if in the path of the storm. The strong outrush of wind from a thunderstorm is often called a downburst. One of the primary causes is rain cooled air. The rain cooled air accelerates downward rapidly producing a potentially damaging gust of wind. Strong downbursts are often mistaken for tornadoes. They can produce extensive damage and are often accompanied by a roaring sound similar to a tornado. Downbursts can easily overturn mobile homes, tear roofs off houses, and topple trees.



Thunderstorm winds can produce damage just like a small tornado



## Lightning Awareness



The 3rd **National Lightning Awareness Week** will be June 22 - 28, 2003. Lightning is rather common since every thunderstorm produces it. As a result, people at times "take it for granted" and often do not pay proper attention. Some recent studies have indicated that lightning deaths and injuries are often not reported, thus the current statistics may greatly underestimate the real problem. Whatever the statistics, it is obvious that lightning is a danger that cannot be ignored. A 1997 study done by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) of 35 years of USA lightning statistics showed the following: Note: There 5 deaths caused by lightning in Missouri in 2003.

1. Location of incident: 40% Not reported, 27% Open fields, 14% Under trees, 8% Water related, 5% Golf related, 3% Heavy equipment, 2.4% Telephone related, 0.7% Radio, transmitter and antenna related

2. Gender of Victims: 84% male, 16% Female

3. Months of Most Incidents: July 30%, August 22%, June 21%

A study co-sponsored by the National Center of Atmospheric Research and NOAA for the years 1959 - 1994 listed the top states for deaths and injuries.

Deaths: Top 5 States: Florida, North Carolina, Texas, New York, and Tennessee (Missouri ranks 17th)

Injuries: Top 5 States: Florida, Michigan, Pennsylvania, North Carolina, and New York (Missouri ranks 31st)